776 strength (nyama) of the divinity it represents (1).
778

1. That strength is particularly active at the angles of the plank and thus takes on the name boy nyama, "venomous nyama."

778 The pembele is an altar, a guarantee of prosperity, life, and the spiritual and material patrimony of the group to which it belongs. There are different types of pembele: those belonging strictly to families, on which the meat eaten by the family is carved, and those belonging to sanctuaries, which must be engraved with symbolic marks. The small board used for circumcisions bears the same name; it /37/ recalls Mousso Koroni's mutilation on the pembele and the origin of the removal of foreskin and clitoris from the human body (2).

2. See p. 38.

The role of Pemba, as promoter of the force, nyama, which activates all beings, and as the hypostasis of the earth, is illustrated by the ritual use the Bambara made of the pembele which represents Pemba.

●[764] After each death, the head of the family gathers the force, nyama, which emanates from the corpse, and entrusts it to the pembele, "which preserves it until a birth occurs in the family." A parallel ritual bestows the force of the dead ancestor on the newborn child (3).

3. See p. 253.

At the time of the ceremonies relating to the large pembele, "all the participants bring a small piece of meat which, after having been placed on the plank, is eaten raw so that fire may not destroy the beneficial nyama emanating from the divinity itself" (4).

4. S. de Ganay, op. cit., p. 199.

Finally, "in cases where it is necessary to obtain a maximum of nyama, infinitesimal slivers of wood are taken from the corners of the board, where its force is concentrated... However, if this practice is abused, the nyama of the earth becomes diminished. It is

826 827 The mouth and tongue, ejectors of the word, can be compared in importance to the ear, a receptive organ. It is through the ear that man receives and remembers the word. Its role is comparable to that of the sex organs which eject life and receive it. The ear in itself has both sexes: male by its auricle, female by its orifice. This duality expresses the basic duality of man. That is why the corpse of [764] an uncircumcised man is sometimes amputated at the ear rather than at the foreskin.

826 301 Because of the symbolism of its shape and because of its function, the ear is adorned. Men formerly wore three copper rings on the right ear and four on the left, the number seven representing the complete being, male and female, ni and dya. Women wear four rings on each auricle or, if they can, twenty-two, which represent the twenty-two stages of creation, or the twenty-two generative categories. Sometimes, for both men and women, a single ring attached to the earlobe represents the mother of the other rings (1).

[178]

1. In olden times, men and women wore cowrie shells on their ears in the place of copper rings, a custom which would seem to be still respected in certain villages today. These shells played the same part as copper.

827 191 301 776 But the role of this adornment goes much further. As symbol of the word, it is through the ornaments that the spirit Téliko, master of sound, hears what /68/ is said to man. They attract sound and send it back to Téliko and Faro, who thus judge the acts and words of men. To wear earrings did not originally mean to adorn oneself, but to hear the spirits as well as to force them to hear what was said (2). Its second effect is to embarass the liar, the bearer of false news

2. Rings placed on musical instruments have the same purpose and also symbolize those worn by men. See p. 282.

or evil words, by putting him in the position of being understood by the invisible, therefore of being judged by them. A pleasant or well-intentioned word benefits the one to whom it is addressed and this

761 funeral rites. There it joins the ancestral forces, the aggregate of which forms a whole whose power is used by the descendants during the seasonal rituals for beneficial purposes.

764 The body is buried; it "belongs to the termites" and in the end only 761 the bones will remain and be honored as a testimony of the physical life. Sometimes they are removed from the tomb, examined, and prayed to before being replaced.

761 When a birth occurs in the family the newborn child, having in- 844 herited the ni and the dya of the deceased, receives his nyama preserved in the pembele and his given name, toko; thus one being replaces another, using the same forces which are used over again and again. Life transmits itself intact. Not only is it undiminished by death, but the dya's sojourn in Faro's residence is thought to be a "reviving," a desirable and beneficial purification. Similarly, the passing of the ni onto the family altars brings about a rejuvenation.

761 On the altars and in the tombs, the "exuviae and bones counted and classified by Faro," are a valid testimony for eternity and serve to maintain the integrity of the whole world of living and dead until the final resurrection.

Attributes of the Person

The Name

551 The organization of the total family /famille indivise/ of the Bambara has already been the object of descriptive works (1). It is

1. In particular Ch. Monteil, Les Empires du Mali; H. Labouret, Les Manding et leur langue /The Malinke and their Language/.

however, appropriate to mention it since certain elements such as family names, devices, taboos, and kinship relationships described as "joking" are related to the components of the person.

Socially, the person is first placed by his given name, toko, that of the ancestor who gave him his ni and his dya, or any other in the paternal or maternal line. The given name indicates the relation to a family group as well as /74/ the person's individuality. It is accompanied by the father's family name (dyamu), whose origin and

551 The device is recited on numerous occasions. After a birth, the
576 griot proclaim it in the course of the name-giving ceremony, address-
778 ing themselves to the father, then to the newborn child /79/ who thus
564 receives it for the first time. At a marriage the barama of the two partners are alternatly recited. In everyday life, the recitation is carried on most frequently during religious ceremonies or feasts. In the hunt or at war, it has the effect of helping the participants and increasing their courage (1). In a meeting it is used to greet people

[127] 1. If the griot recites it to a war chief and the town under attack is taken, he receives part of the loot.

bearing the same name, and if one of the assistants is to be particularly honored, the first words of his device are recited.

551 In case of illness, the ally (senãnku) (2) comes to the patient's
755

2. See p. 119.

side and recites his barama to encourage him and help him get well. If he is dying, the recitation, which is then the equivalent of a prayer, may help his soul return. After death, the ally, the griot, and the [764] blacksmiths come near the corpse to recite his barama in order to honor him.

551 The devices pertaining to the various crafts are used when address-
576 ing the artisan with whom one has business. Thus the blacksmith to
539 whom one brings work is greeted first by his name to which is then added:

"ini fara ani goni, you are with stone and fire."

A person crossing a field will say to the farmer bent over the earth: "i ni tye i ba ka kusebe daba, greeting to him who handles the hoe well," or simply: "i ni tye daba la, greeting to him who is with the hoe." To the shoemaker one would say: "bana ani ba golo, (you are) with the acacia (3) and the goat leather."

[386] 3. This refers to the bana or boina (Acacia arabica) used by the shoemaker to make a black dye.

291 activity is not involved. Nevertheless, a woman puts on an indigo
773 loincloth the day she resumes sexual relations with her husband after
822 the end of her menses; she retains it until pregnancy. When she is sure
531 of her condition, she puts the loincloth in the sun to purify it and will place the newborn child in it to remind him later that he owes his life to his parents. A dead person who has broken a taboo is buried in an indigo shroud, the only reminder of light being a white cotton thread which is placed on the corpse as an expression of apology and forgiveness. Since indigo is taboo in most of Faro's sacred places, no one wears it during sacrifices or religious ceremonies.

White and indigo complement each other. To twist a white and an indigo thread together to make a string used for holding an amulet is to "roll together happiness and unhappiness, as in life."

The dye wolo is the color of yellow copper. It is in this color that the newly circumcised are dressed after the operation and until they are healed. Red, mbegu, is the color of copper and of blood. Hunters who wear a tunic of mbegu are "covered with a garment of blood." The band kayo (Pl. III, a, 1), in which are found these two colors, indigo and white, reproduces the rainbow: the white intervals are symbols of the word and of purity. /110/ A person making a sacrifice sews a piece of this band on his clothing to indicate that he is circumcised, that he is a hunter, and that he is truthful in his actions and words. A band is hung at the gate of the northern entry to the village in order to protect its inhabitants from dangers coming from outside. A man wears it when he has been ill or has suffered serious financial or family difficulties. On the altars, on the doorways, the colors are represented by millet mash, blood, and kola nut extract. As the rainbow keeps away the rain and dries up water, the kayo strip may not be worn near the river or during sexual intercourse, for it is Faro's taboo.

The band sirakele (literally, a road) (Pl. III, a, 2) represents Faro's descent from the seventh part of the sky down to the seventh part of the earth, the indigo stripe being the dyi fi, "black water," the spirit's earth seat. When put on the loincloth of a married woman, it expresses her rectitude and the good behavior she intends to maintain towards her husband. When worn by a traveler, it prevents him from losing his way.

291 The buguni (1) (Pl. III, a, 3) is "the sun ray Faro gave to Pemba
773
821
531

1. The word designates the band's place of origin, Bougouni.

291 773 822 801 The nyeba, "big eye," or koloso tyema, "mixed masculinity" (with femininity), (Pl. III, a, 11) also represents creation, here symbolized by the double layer of five indigo and white bands (1). At

1. On the value of number 5, see pp. 24, 25.

the same time the cloth also symbolizes the complete man, said to be both masculine and feminine. A newborn child, but never an illegitimate one, is clothed in it.

291 773 The band soli (Pl. III, a, 5) represents the good conduct of Mousso Koroni at the beginning of her life as well as her betrayal which brought disorder on earth.

531 In olden times, people who had committed bad deeds were obliged [764] to wear it. Today it is used as the shroud for a child who dies immediately after birth; a strip is sewn to the garment of a recently excised girl or to the loincloth of a woman insured in childbirth. When differences or conflicts arise within a family, a fragment is placed in amulets which the women must then wear.

[828] The wutu nyekorotike (Pl. III, a, 6) pictures the disorderly voyage of Mousso Koroni, her despair and her madness. This pattern is reserved for insane people in order to warn others of their condition.

The band gombo (Pl. III, a, 7) recalls the pursuit of Mousso /112/ Koroni by the god Pemba into the depths of the sky and the earth.

The band tyatyeli (Pl. III, a, 8) a picture of Mousso Koroni's defeat, symbolizes human work. It is given to a courageous and energetic woman. It is circulated among those present at religious ceremonies and its mere presence indicates that nothing here below is obtained without work and that all stems from work. To wear this band strengthens the man who is entering upon a task in a village other than his own.

The band saki is the koblenkaba, "red sky." It symbolizes heat, anger, difficulties, and sorrows. It is woven at the time of marriage negotiations for the purpose of resolving any differences of opinion.

[844] A piece of it is dipped into the blood after birth and then thrown away in order to purify everything.

[822] The blue stripes of dyitala represent impurity, and the red stripes, purification by sacrifice. Whoever has broken a taboo wears the blue, and the red when he is purified. A piece of red cloth may be inserted into the vagina of a young woman, after she has lost her virginity or

B. The Altars

778 794 Each family head wears a small altar called kere la boli ni (literally, little side altar), which maintains relations with the souls of the members of the family for which he is, in part, responsible. /132/ In case of illness he offers sacrifices on this boli for the recovery of the patient. In case of death, he keeps the soul in it temporarily before carrying it to the collective altar of the Komo (1). He also sacrifices on this

1. The society, the altars, and the role of the Komo are described on pages ff.

altar at the time of sowing.

[763] If the family head is himself very ill, the altar is placed on his head in an effort to replace the soul which is escaping with that which the altar contains. If he dies, it is placed on his chest to take in the [764] soul which is then transported to the sanctuary of the Komo. At the end of seven days, the object is given to the deceased's eldest son who, upon becoming family head, sacrifices two goats to the Komo on this occasion.

The čuafebla (literally, worn at the hip) is made by a father for his son when the latter attains maturity and is on the point of leading a man's life, farming his own field and founding a family.

If there is no Komo in the village, the father may make it earlier, right after the name-giving ceremony.

The altar is made of hyena tails, scorpion tails, and whole peppers tied with a little stick; it represents the owner's flesh and blood.

It receives an annual sacrifice at the time of sowing after the collective offering tothe Komo. This takes place in the family courtyard in the presence of all the members of the family (2). Moreover,

778 794 773 241 2. The cult rendered on this altar brings the intervention of the Sago spirit whose agricultural role is still obscure at the present stage of the inquiry. He taught men how to water their fields.

"Two birds konodyanfi began to circle and sing above the workers in the fields;

304 [292 534] During the seclusion, they wear about their head a piece of white cloth, Faro's color, which has the same function as the cap of the circumcised boy. They shake a gourd bolokode barani, filled with eight grains or small pebbles, whose sound keeps passers-by away. The leaps, which they perform over the fire made of clothes, gourds, and refuse that have been ignited, end the seclusion and rid them of their wanzo, which goes to settle in the altars of the ndomo.

It is said of a young girl who was well excised that she is well behaved and carries herself with dignity. On the contrary, it is said of a girl of light morals "that her hands were not washed clean" (1),

1. A bolo ma ko ka dye ya.

which means that she was improperly excised.

Funerals

761 764 775 The effect of death is to dissociate the elements composing the person. The body becomes a corpse (su) from which the /189/ ni and the dya escape to follow their particular destinies, while the tere is transformed into nyama, an active and dangerous force which wanders about the deceased. The funeral rites aim first to channel the deceased's spiritual elements which must be conserved in the interest of the deceased as well as that of the community. Moreover, through the care given to the body and to these elements, the memory of the dead person is piously kept up. The notion of a final resurrection, promised to all who have lived, inspires these preparations. The bones of the deceased, which are like the exuvia of his physical body, its solid and durable framework, join the exuvia of his soul which is kept in the altars of the Komo. Thus, at the end of time, the dead man "will rise and, to everyone's joy, join his family."

764 The funeral rites, which the Bambara have always celebrated, have evolved along with their beliefs. At the time when the cult of the balanza was flourishing, the dead bodies were hung from trees until they rotted, their bones picked up and kept by their descendants. [532] The ancestors of the Gwonna then carved pieces of sunzun wood called mani (literally, little person) in the image of the dead. The length of the wood was proportionate to the length of the body; the head, arms, legs, and genitals were carefully reproduced. The mani

764 were kept by the village patriarch and the cult of the ancestors was celebrated upon these altars.

At the present time, the body is buried during rites in which the Komo plays an important role for the initiates. As soon as a member is seriously ill, the family head places upon the dying man's chest 763 778 the portable altar, kere la boli ni, which belongs to the community. He does not leave the bedside in order to catch the last breath. Immediately after death, without turning back or saying a word to anyone, he goes to the chief of the Komo who places the object in the [775] sanctuary where the altars are kept. The soul is introduced into the nimara boli (1).

[843]

1. See p. 192. In former times, the soul of the dead man was caught between two gourds which were then joined together and hung on the conjugal bed. When the woman became pregnant, the gourds were broken over her abdomen in order to make the soul penetrate the foetus. Later on this method of transmission of the soul was no longer possible because of the impurity brought about by "frivolous discussions regarding the arrangements and situations of creation."

764 Upon his return to the house of the deceased, the family head brushes his hand over the dead man's face to gather his nyama which he then entrusts to Pemba by rubbing the cavity in the family pembele "so that the total of the work he has accomplished during his life will not be dissolved by death, but will be like /190/ an accumulated force serving the community, and so that his intelligence, his qualities, and his skill in different kinds of work, especially in agriculture, will not be lost but will be found in other members of the family. The [778] block of wood, acting as an altar for storing the forces, preserves this nyama until a new birth occurs in the family" (2).

2. S. De Ganay, "Aspects de mythologie et de symbolique bambara," p. 199.

764 The corpse is the object of particular care. In the case of a blacksmith or a Soma, two stalks of millet are placed for a few moments on either side "for the nostalgia of the body" (1). This custom indicates

1. Fari nana fi, literally, "body of the black face."

that the soul, temporarily in the Komo altar, and the exuvia which will later replace it, feel sad for the animate body that will become the prey of the termites. These stalks symbolize the two ancestors who accompanied Koumabana into the great beyond, the death in this case repeating in some way the story of the appearance of death on the world (2).

2. See pp. 45, 46.

The combination of the body and the two symbols adds up to the number three, the male number, and recalls the three taps given to the newborn of male sex at his birth. A few moments later a kinsman places the stalks on each side of the door to the dead man's house. [576] The mourners who come to convey their condolences crouch before them, putting cowrie shells at their feet in the greatest silence, for "to talk and to cry increases the sins of the dead man, and tears increase his burden."

764 554 If the deceased is an important personage, especially if he is chief of the village or head of a family, the signs of the actual world and the future world (bolo ti doniya, Fig. 1) are sometimes drawn upon his index finger and thumb. The senãnku, the blacksmiths, and the griot come to recite his device (barama) and receive in thanks the clothes which belonged to him.

764 The eldest son of the Komo chief, who is first advised of the death, brings the news to his father who asks him to announce it to the men of his age grade. Each of the subsequent age grade is notified by a delegate from the preceding one. Finally, the young circumcised men, recently admitted to the society, go to tell the women and the uncircumcised the hour when the mask is to come out. However, only the funeral of an elder, a village or district chief, obligates all the members to move about.

764 The members of the oldest age grade go to the home of the deceased. The eldest son of the Komo chief, holding /191/ the ritual whistle between his teeth, whistles alternatively in the right and left ears, then into the eyes of the dead man, which he closes while pulling his two toes. He then says: "So and so has not answered."

The chief of the Komo next comes to "touch the corpse while it is still warm in order to return to Faro that which belongs to him." He then draws a line upon the body (see Fig. 16) with his little finger dipped in boiled millet mash. In 1 and 2, the strength of the little finger acts by sending away the semen which is in the blood. In 4, it suppresses the voice (for the dead man will talk no more) as well as "the tastes, savors, and appetites of his tongue, the power of his jaws, and the air in his mouth." In 5 it returns all that was in his head, such as ideas, experiences, opinions, folly, and wisdom, through the left ear, removing all the sounds it has heard, the good as well as the bad. Next the ear is plugged. Whatever it has heard will return to the one who will inherit his soul and his double, as the dead man in the grave must hear only with his right ear the whistle of the Komo and all that will be communicated to him. In 6 it removes "the will power and stubbornness" so that the dead may submit to Faro even in the grave. It next touches the navel, 3, and all the joints to send back the semen which lies in man's marrow.

764 The corpse is then transported into a contiguous chamber for an 764 ablution performed by a member of the society who wears over his shoulder the sack containing the Komo altars and who drones out a song celebrating the Soma Moriba Sidibé (1). The two millet stalks

1. The ablution is performed with the contents of a large gourd (dyuru fle nyẽ) to which are added the contents of a small gourd (dye fle nyẽ) which represents the "last water of the dead man."

are placed upon the body during the ablutions "which purify and calm his soul."

764 Dressed in its finest clothes, the body is brought back to the main room where its hair is shaved. The deceased's own individual altar is given to the chief of the Komo who places it near the nimara boli. It is at this time that the bell bearer (grindavo) goes to the village

764 and announces that the mask is about to be brought out so that people would go back to their home. At noon, a member of the society puts on the paraphernalia of the Komo society and walks forth, preceded by the son of the chief, who whistles a funeral tune. He wears on his shoulder the sack containing the altars and carries in his right hand the axe and the dagger. The two men are followed by the newly circumcised boys carrying the body and by the members who are present. At the burial ground (sudoyoro) the procession places the corpse on its back near the grave freshly dug by the young /192, Fig. 16 appears here in original text/ /193/ men of the most recent age grade (1). To the rhythm beaten out by three blacksmith drummers,

[535]

1. In the vicinity of Ségou the dead are most frequently buried in the fields; a ronier is planted over the grave.

the son of the deceased and later all the participants dance in turn, kicking up with their feet a little earth over the corpse at the end of each musical phrase.

A female goat (or a male one) brought by the family is sacrificed and the blood runs in part over the altars and in part into the grave, while the chief of the Komo recites the following prayer:

"Let (your family) rest in peace; let our harvests be blessed; let your happiness come to us later; your sacrifices are performed" (2).

2. I ka du to; ana senefɛ ka barka;
i ka here ka na an ye; i ka saraka be bwora.

The sacrifice performed over the altars is a repetition of that which has already been accomplished in the sanctuary at the time the deceased's soul is deposited. But, to the young initiates who do not know it, it is at this moment only that the transfer of the soul to the nimara boli is effected through the vehicle of the sacrificial blood.

The eldest man of the age grade sucks up with the whistle of the Komo a little blood from the slit throat of the animal and blows on the corpse; another elder sucks up some blood in turn and blows it into the grave. A third does the same and whistles into the right ear of the corpse "so that the deceased, having received a complete sacrifice, may not ask for anything else." A griot next takes the whistles and

764
532

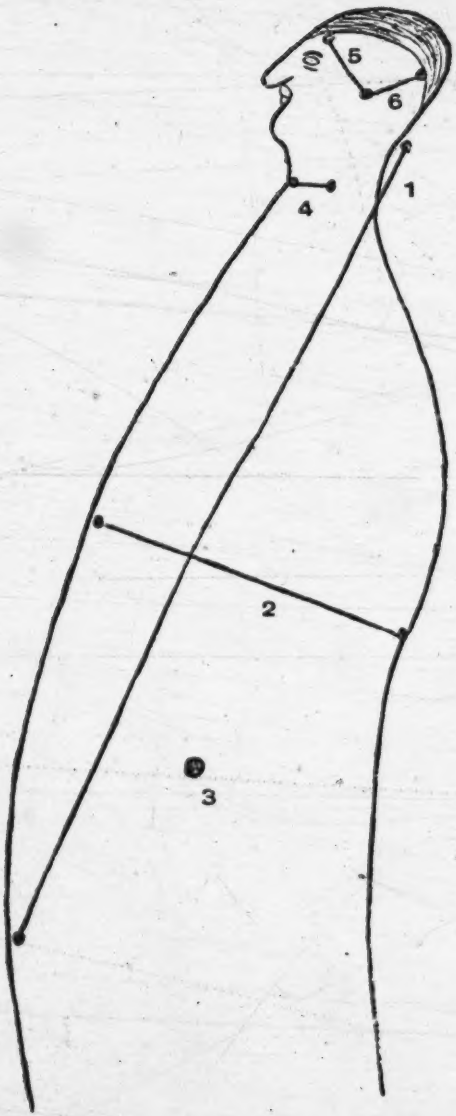

Fig. 16 — Drawing made with millet mash by the chief of the Komo on a cadaver. (Drawing by an informant.)

764 inserts them into the deceased's throat; he fills his own mouth with food previously brought forth by a woman and blows until the stomach of the deceased is filled. The rest of the food is placed near the dead man who is lowered into the grave by his sons and daughters. He is laid down on his right side, facing east, in the hole, sele dɛ̃, dug at the bottom of the grave. The two stalks of millet are placed next to him; they are more powerful than the forces of decay and destruction, and affirm the immortality of the ancestors. Together with the corpse, they are the image of the first three who died and the whole expresses the hope of resurrection promised to men.

While songs burst forth in honor of the deceased, the young men cover him with fresh branches before closing the grave; above the grave the masker whistles to proclaim that hereafter it is he who will settle the problems of the dead.

[768] The objects formerly belonging to the deceased, such as bed, mat, pipe, and razor, are then put into a pile with a little bag containing his hair. Fire is set to the pile while the chief of the Komo recites the following prayer: "Let your burned possessions leave to wait /194 before you, let them leave in smoke. We are behind, we are not in front of you; ask happiness for us. Let all the dyo with the pincers and the anvil come, let peace come" (1).

1. I ka fɛ̃ maralew dyenina, n ka ta i kono i nye, m bita šiši fe, an bi ko an ti nye, i ka here nyini ã nye; ka dyow ani bala ani kula, dũ ka na.

The masker dances about the hearth, whistling and throwing up dust. The children of the deceased who are impregnated with his nyama leap three times over the flame; the force, absorbed by the smoke, is dissipated with it.

The meat of the sacrificed animal is cooked, eaten by the participants, and the containers are broken.

769 Three days after the death, the family goes down to the river bank and throws in the clothing of the deceased as well as a plate of food; both will serve to clothe and feed the double. They then recite the following prayer:

"My father Faro, a person of my family has died, here is his offering of the three days; make him return again in a woman's womb" (2).

776
787 attend his burial despite the fact that the rituals have not been performed. If not, he is abandoned to the care of his family.

764 To neglect the rituals assuring life in the beyond and the security
775 of the living causes the shadow su dya, or the ghost su kere dye (literally, white side of the dead man), to arise and present itself under the same which the dead man had on earth, to claim his due from his descendants.

Ancestor Cult

769 In the entryway of some residences a supporting stake (cɛ̌ dloma),
778 sometimes marked by seven notches, represents the founding ancestor of the family. On the anniversary of his death the stake is oiled "to refresh his soul." In addition, each year the owner of the house sacrifices to all the ancestors on the family altar, on the stake, and on the threshold of the door. In some villages the ancestors are called upon by tapping the threshold with a little wooden hammer, dyele kala ni, which represents them.

In the courtyards, pieces of wood stuck in the ground (jigi semen dloma) represent the paternal uncle, the brother of the founder, and are used as seats for the heads of families who lean against them "in order to lean well upon the traditions." Farmers, before leaving for the fields, rub their hoes on them to show them to the ancestors.

769 Before planting the women give the head of the family a ball of
241 raw millet, which he lines up to represent the dead according to age and rank. Then he gives them a pinch of the seed beginning with the one representing the most recent deceased and calling successively all the dead by name. The paste and the seeds are then put in water and the mash thus obtained is poured on the /196/ doorposts to the entryway of the family house upon which the blood of a sacrificial victim also is poured. When the planting time comes, the chief who has prepared the mash made with a few grains taken from the seeds distributes this to the women, beginning with the one who represents the oldest deceased. He asks the ancestors to watch over, during the germination period, the soul of the millet which will descend into the seed with the first rainfall. When the millet has reached maturity, the first seeds harvested are placed in a pot on the threshing floor where the grain will be threshed later, and are distributed to the women in the same manner as the time of planting, the oldest of the deceased having to receive the first of the seed.

769 continuity is established between the living and the dead, with the deceased acting as intermediary. Religious customs, magic, and civil law, all are intermingled in apparent disorder, and the casual or inexperienced observer is all the more confused inasmuch as diverse accessory or circumstantial features mask the essentials in being more obvious. [164]

Does not the same sort of confusion confront a foreigner in France who sees the funeral of a prominent citizen? If he is uninformed, how is he to recognize the religious rites and civil requirements which form the common basis of all funeral ceremonies, for the great and for the humble, brought to their highest development for the one, reduced to their absolute minimum for the other.

764 Therefore, the important thing to show here is the substratum on which all funeral observances rest. For the sake of clarity, we shall divide the period of 40 days into four phases: (a) from death to burial; (b) burial; (c) the funeral celebration; (d) the period of mourning.

763 (a) From death to burial. As soon as death occurs, the fact is announced to everyone by appropriate means.

The lamentations of the women burst forth, and this spreads the news in the immediate vicinity, while gunshots inform the whole settlement. These acts have something of the ritual that was carried out when a Bambara died in war. Raffenel has given us a remarkable picture of it.

763 "When a Bambara died in battle, three gunshots, fired near the door of his hut by one of his companions-at-arms, an-
152 nounced his death to the family. Wailings answered this announcement, and the weeping women of the village came out of all the huts to run to the house from where the signal had been heard. Everything was abandoned in order to share in this sorrow. First they wept, and then they ran to find out where the mourning was...

763 "The warrior charged with this mission arrived at the door at a gallop. He pulled up his horse, slowly loaded his gun, shot it, reloaded it again, then again... , and when the third shot had rung out, he rode off with equal speed, without uttering a word, without giving a single detail... Two shots announced enslavement."

763 A gunshot today most likely signals the death of a hunter or the father of a hunter. In any case, however, there are always cries and vociferations by [165] the women, who are joined by their friends, relatives, and neighbors.

Horsemen ride off to notify any of the sons of the deceased who are away.

[567] Meanwhile, the chief of the slaves, the major-domo, the confidential agent, or a friend or neighbor of the deceased goes to inform the chief and the principal men in the village.

764 These personages come to the mortuary house at once, spear in hand. After being received by the man temporarily in charge of the house, they go to the deceased to discover his identity and at the same time express their condolences to the family represented by the person who received them; then they withdraw.

In the mortuary hut silence descends while the women prepare the body. They wash it with warm water usually [824] scented with basil, su-ko-la (Ocimum album and febrifugum); they dry it and wrap it in pieces of native white cotton material or else dress it in its own garments, likewise white. A mat [285] of coarse straw (tyekala, kara) is placed in the middle of the room. A fine, flexible mat made of iphène leaves is put on top of it, and the women lay out the corpse on the second mat. Sometimes they place a grindstone on the abdomen to keep it from swelling.

When these preparations are completed, the women, [352] dressed in white native cloth, sit down in the native fashion on 516 tiny stools in the mortuary hut. Those who come in from outside give evidence of terrible grief: they cry out, they weep, [152] they cover their heads with a bit of cloth and hurry toward the mortuary hut. As soon as they enter, they become quiet and stop weeping.

152 Among the Bambara grief is never silent; it is customary to show it overtly. As soon as there is a crowd, the singing 764 begins, in rhythm to the clapping of hands. One person or 767 another will be inspired to sing of the achievements and virtues of the deceased. Professional weepers and mourners mingle with the crowd, guiding and gradually encouraging the noisy display.

764 The provisional master takes his place at the door or inside the blon', the vestibule of the house, and receives the condolences. [166]

Several days elapse between death and burial in order to give distant or absent relatives time to arrive. During this period the funeral songs become more and more elaborate and [533] are left to professional singers who are accompanied by various instruments: tom-toms, xylophones (bala), guitars. The singers, dancers, and mourners exert themselves all the more if they think there will be substantial rewards.

The children of the house (den'-u, de-u) are allowed a good deal of freedom during this period, as though the authority which had curbed them had ended with the life of the deceased. They are allowed to take hens and goats, to eat lavishly, sing, dance, and generally rejoice.

On the night preceding the burial, the deceased is placed outside under a shelter (gwa); the songs and dances [857] continue. It is customary for the children (de-u) of the house, led by the professional members of the funeral orchestra, to take part in the singing and dancing.

Relatives, friends, neighbors, and persons obligated to the family are expected to bring offerings in proportion to their rank or indebtedness so as to contribute to the meals and to [689] the funeral alms. This is a very strict obligation; any failure to comply not only shows a lack of respect for the dead, but is also an offense which the family must avenge. The chronicle of Ségou bears witness to this fact.

763 764 Along with the religious ceremonies, events of an entirely different nature take place. If the death should seem in any way suspicious, it is the duty of the family to investigate the matter without delay. It is particularly the heir presumptive, if he is present, who is required to take steps at once to clarify the matter; he questions the ancestors and consults seers and magicians. The funeral ceremonies are sometimes dominated and even conditioned by the results of these investigations and consultations. At the very least, it would be essential to obtain the lifting of the interdict imposed on the

763 deceased in case he had been killed by a genie (nyana). Sacri-
764 fices, alms, or the payment of a fine are necessary in that event, along with intervention by the priest of the nyana in question.

764 Most often, the body is turned over to a priest (nyana-n-tigi) [167] if the deceased was a member of a brotherhood.

[735] In any event, it is customary to give alms at the cross-roads near the village.

768 Further, the death of the fa puts an end (1) to the au-
357

1. When a king of Kaarta died, the interruption in sovereignty often gave rise to serious anarchic disturbances.

thority held by him, and this may have serious consequences, since for the moment everyone is virtually independent. That is why the servitor who had the master's confidence and who actually ran the establishment retains his role after taking certain precautions (2). In particular he must make sure that the

2. This was the role that Ngolo Dyâra was seeking when he asked to be placed as "guard at the master's door."

movable property of the deceased is not carried off. He is familiar with these things, and he is the guardian responsible for them. He makes the women return the gold jewelry and valuable fabrics, puts everything in a safe place, and makes an inventory in the presence of the heir presumptive.

764 (b) Burial. The deceased may be buried in the ground within his hut or at least in a corner of his establishment. In former times there was a cemetery outside the village, often near the grove of the nyana dugu-da-siri (guardian genie of the village), and in such cases it was apparent that the more important the deceased, the nearer his romb to the sacred place.

766 For persons of distinction there is usually a special kind
764 of grave. It is about two meters long, and while the opening

764 is two or three meters wide at the surface of the ground, it is
766 barely a meter wide at a depth of a meter and a half. Three of its walls are vertical, and the fourth is sloping. At the bottom and along the whole length of this fourth side, a hollow is prepared to receive the body, which is placed on its right side with the head toward the south if the deceased is a man, and to the north in the case of a woman.

764 It is usual for the priests of the brotherhoods to dig the grave. In the course of their work, following a special ritual, they collect various elements for [168] their magic. In any case, it is regarded as dangerous to handle anything having to do with death, and only a priest can do it with impunity.

When the time for burial is at hand, the touching ceremony of farewell to the dead takes place under the direction of the principal gravedigger. Wrapped in the mats on which it lay in the house, the body is placed under a shelter (geva) in the courtyard of the house. Everyone in turn pays his respects to the deceased and asks pardon. Everyone in turn, from the eldest to the youngest, comes forward, accusing himself of failings and faults and begging the deceased to grant him protection. All this is done through the mediation of the principal gravedigger who ceaselessly intones: "Pardon us! Do not be angry; we loved you and respected you; be happy and protect us!" Then everyone chants in unison: "Give us rain in the winter, make our harvests abundant; bring prosperity to our houses, and give us many children, wives, and wealth."

When this ceremony has come to an end, the gravediggers lift the corpse to their shoulders and, preceded by the weeping and lamenting children (de-u) and followed by the
[482] crowd of relatives, friends, and neighbors, they set off at a fast pace, almost on the run, toward the tomb. There, the body is put down beside the grave; the men stand around it with the women behind them. The sons of the deceased go down into the grave, open the mat, take hold of the body, and place it in the niche. They tear loose a corner of the shroud or shirt and hand the end of this torn fragment to someone present who holds it outside the grave. With wooden scoops or sun-dried tiles they

764 close the opening of the niche and carefully fill any cracks with earth moistened and kneaded on the spot.

During all this the women sing in a low voice and clap their hands, accompanied by muffled drums.

When all is done, the sons of the deceased come out of the excavation, and the principal gravedigger comes forward with his spade upside down on his shoulder and holding a gourd full of water in his hand. Silence falls, and the women and drummers are still. He pours some water at the head of the grave, saying: "See this water. Do not be angry, pardon [169] us, give us rain in the winter and an abundant harvest. May the wind blow from the east or from the west, from the north or from the south, as is best for us. Give us long life, many descendants, wives, and wealth." And the throng replies: "So be it (o de ka ke)."

With the back side of their spades the gravediggers then fill in the excavation. The women resume their singing in rhythm with the clapping of hands, and accompanied by subdued drums, they say: "Our fa is dead, but he will return! Young men, fill in the grave well so that no sorcerer (suba), no hyena, no wild beast can carry away the corpse."

764 778 789 When the grave is filled in, the person holding the strip of material still attached to the shroud pulls it so that it breaks. This bit of cloth is a precious relic for use in various magical performances. The magical bands called tafo are made from it and are tied around the waist to protect one from back ailments and spectral apparitions (1).

1. These are a few of the innumerable examples of magic practices which in the most diverse forms accompany all important activities.

The coarse mat which had served as a bed for the deceased is put upon the grave, along with a pair of his old sandals and his water jug. The finer mat is usually given to a friend or to a family, and it is then burned outside the village (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

764 789 Burials are never willingly held on either Wednesday or Saturday (1) [Ed., see footnote above].

Finally, a small white chicken (2) to ward off bad luck

2. If the corpse is a woman, a fertilized egg is used.

is sometimes put into the niche just before it is closed off (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

Upon returning from the burial, someone clubs the dead man's dog (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above], unless he left express orders to the contrary. Some Bambara even go so far [554] as to buy a dog with this posthumous honor in mind. This seems to be another magic practice to exorcise the ghost of the deceased (1) [Ed., see footnote 1 above].

When they have returned to the house, the brothers-in-law of the deceased eat the national dish, millet mush (to). When they leave for their homes, each is given a rooster or a hen in the name of the deceased, which they must eat en route before they reach home. If the fowl [170] were not eaten until they reached their villages, it would arouse the dead man's vengeance; his ghost (nyama) would haunt these impious persons. This too seems to be another magic practice to counteract the evil effects of death.

764 431 (c) The funeral celebration. As soon as the death has been announced, it is the duty of every relative, neighbor, friend, or anyone under any sort of obligation to the deceased to bring an offering in proportion to his rank or degree of obligation for the purpose of honoring the dead (1).

1. We noted earlier the sanctions applied at the funerals of Biton and Ngolo.

In certain cases, the total of these offerings is very large. The chronicle of Ségou tells us that when Ngolo died the cowries contributed filled seven huts, representing several thousand francs. Besides, people give whatever they wish or can afford: a horse, a cow, a sheep, fowl, cowries, gold, strips of native cotton, fabrics, grain, etc.

764 574 Theoretically, all of this is supposed to be used to honor the dead, which is done in several ways. In the first place, it is obligatory to serve food and particularly drink to anyone who comes to present condolences. These meals and drinking bouts are a kind of communion since from everything consumed an offering is first made to the deceased and also [769] to the ancestors whom he has gone to join; it is a kind of communion with the departed members of the family.

These repasts and drinking bouts tend to develop into orgies, and the inexperienced or casual observer may think that they are carousals at the expense of the deceased. As a matter of fact, however, far from suffering a loss, the family of important persons receives more than it spends, at least for the time being (2). The more lavish the celebration, the

2. The family will have to behave reciprocally toward the families who have thus shown their respect when deaths later occur among them.

more it is supposed to please the deceased and cause him to look favorably on his survivors.

764 735 In principle, everything not consumed is supposed to be given away as alms to the poor and not added to the family property. It is quite natural, therefore, that the poor of the village come to partake of the feast, and indeed, they are invited. They must be treated with much cordiality if the sentiment governing the feast conforms to the spirit of the custom. That is why the [171] chronicle tells of Nyana-n-koro, upon the death of Ngolo, claiming that the cowries given should be distributed to the poor, to travelers, and to all the needy; that is the true spirit of the custom, and that type of alms is particularly pleasing to the dead.

The funeral feasting continues for seven days, which are called dyansa, "alms." It is a time especially devoted to [537] condolences, called sanga-fo (1) "funerary discourse." The

1. Literally, "sayings (for the sake) of the dead."

764 period is sometimes reduced to three days, but a week conforms more to custom, as is shown by the Ségou chronicle cited earlier.

All this takes place "at the door of the dead," at the blon'-da, as the natives call it, that is, at the very place where the elder was wont to sit and where offerings were made to the ancestors. It is believed that the soul of the departed is there and will be gratified amidst this abundance honoring him and testifying to his kindness and also to his power. In the minds of the Bambara these repasts of communion form a very strong bond among those who partake of them. The act of eating consecrated food together is a kind of sacrament which binds the participants to mutual aid. A traitor is doomed to be cursed by the manes.

Magic, of course, can free a person from these bonds and even enable him to profit from these funeral gatherings to further the most nefarious schemes, but that does not alter the concepts on which the dyansa and the sanga-fo are based.

765 783 [804] (d) Mourning. The purification of the hut of the deceased takes place on the eighth day. Women pulverize tree bark -- from the cailcedra (2) especially -- put it in water,

2. Khaya senegalensis.

and sprinkle this liquid about the hut which they then sweep.

They assemble with native brooms, sing, and do a kind of dance step; they collect the dirt and throw it away at a crossroads outside the village (3). The hut may then be re-

3. Preferably at the main crossroads (da-n-kun'-ba-la).

occupied. [172]

765 514 During the eight days following the burial, the daughters of the fa live together in strict seclusion. They spend their days in the blon', where they spin cotton and take their meals. To take care of their natural needs, they go out only in a body;

794 of Kore-dyuga-tigi and has the same meaning.

[301] most part strangely accoutered dancers, each of whom dresses as his fancy dictates. As ornaments, the Kor'dyuga wear strings of beautiful red beans, which are inedible, called n-go ble. These beans are about the size of a large dragée and throughout the western Sudan are used as protection against evil spirits.

[292] These dancers have a leader, the Koro-duga-tigi or Kor'dyuga-tigi, who is further distinguished by a kind of cloak made entirely of bits of reed stalks. On his head he wears a conical hat made of the same reeds, and in his hand he carries a long wand from which hang birds' skulls, packets of sorghum straw, gourd stems, etc. In addition to the dancers, the clergy is accompanied by

[785] flagellants (bisa-tyi-la), torchbearers (ta-tugu-la-n-tigi), and people who lash themselves with bundles of thorns (the ngoni-sa-ma-u).

[534] Of course, the Kore has its orchestra, which includes drums (denu-ba), a kind of castanet (kinge), and gourds filled with seeds or pebbles (nkude) and pierced with holes.

794 The cult has the usual ceremonies, with the two great festivals at the times of planting and harvesting. On these oc-
796 casions the Kore-tigi officiates, as the nyana-n-son-na-ba does with respect to nyana dugu-da-siri. He makes the offerings, performs the sacrifices, and sets forth the requests at the foot of the sacred tree, after having thanked the god-protector. The kara and the Kore-kongolo are sprinkled with the blood of the victims; thus, the manes and the nyana of the boli are honored simultaneously.

[764] There is always a meeting of the brotherhood when a Kore-de dies. There are offerings, sacrifices, and communion with all the offerings, which require one or more days of orgies to be consumed, depending on the importance of the deceased, because elders in [282] important posts like that of nyana-n-son-na-ba, etc., are particularly honored at their death.

Young men are admitted only once every seven years, and it is at this time that the ceremonies are most elaborate.

584 She returns to her own family every year at the beginning of the rainy season and goes back to her future in-laws at the start of the dry season.

583 Every year she takes home 30 kola nuts and three cocks, and
584 the young man's fa begins to pay the bride price which traditionally came to eight oxen and five sheep. The girl returns at the dry season bringing fonio, fruits of the karite, and sumbalé (for making sauces), and other products.

583 She is married after the appearance of the first menses, and
585 her husband continues to pay the bride price in the following order: a cow, a bull, a heifer ...

583 Throughout the engagement period, the young man must
584 cultivate the field of his future parents-in-law.

583 Among the Bambara who currently practice the exchange of young girls between two families for marriage purposes, the compensation is no longer paid, although gifts and contributions are still given.

584 On the day of the marriage the girl is accompanied by an
585 attendant who represents her twin, while the young man also is aided by an attendant, and the two couples symbolize the union of the two couples of [94] primordial twins. Finally, the young girl is carried up to the abode constructed for her by her husband. She is followed by a cortege of seven women, each carrying part of the bride's gifts. The investigation being carried out by Mme. Dieterlen in the Bambara country indicates that the seven women represent the seven
[826] seeds that each man possesses in his clavicles; the bride is the fonio seed that is brought to the husband's village, for marriage is considered to be a cultivation.

The marriage of twins requires slightly different rites. When the twins are not of the same sex, the boy must deflower the girl before she marries (there is only one intercourse). If the twins are two boys, the first to marry must let his wife have relations with his twin. If the twins are girls, the husband of the first to be married must also unite with the second.

f. Death and Funerals

761 Death dissociates the different elements which make up the
764 person. The purpose of the funeral rites is to gather the spiritual

761 principles of the cadaver on altars or masks in order to preserve them
764 for the community.

The rites have undergone an evolution. Formerly the bodies
764 were hung from trees until they rotted, while the bones were kept. At present the bodies are buried. Only a band of cotton symbolizing the tongue of the deceased, that is, his word, is attached to the
[764] branch of a tree. If the deceased was an initiate of the Komo, the society plays an important role in the funeral rites.

All these rites have been studied by G. Dieterlen and Tauxier.
766 Monteil has described at great length the funeral ceremonies of a chief: the three rifle shots recalling his combats, the lamentations of the women, the notification of the village notables, the offerings of relatives and friends, the alms at the crossroads, and finally, the inhumation. The body is prepared, the head shaved, the interior cleaned with water and salt. A paste of water and ground cowry is put into the body openings (the ground cowries possess a divine spirit assuring the preservation of the cadaver). The body, and particularly the head, is daubed with this same paste, then the body is laid on its right side, feet to the north (a woman would be laid on her left side). Finally, the funeral celebration takes place, with the ritual feast
765 and the purifications. Seven days later the celebration of commemoration (Sangha) takes place, followed by the mourning of the women for forty days. After this time the deceased is transformed into a living ancestor.

763 The Bambara receive omens of their death or of a chief's death from certain signs given them in the bush, such as coming across a chameleon on a red anthill, the cry of a certain mythical hyena, the passing of certain crying monkeys or certain birds.

Certain gifted beings have the ability to perceive the departure of a person's spiritual forces and his imminent death. Sometimes they are able to bring back these forces and reinstate them in the body to save the man in danger.

[95] g. Ancestor Worship

769 After his death a man is transformed into a living ancestor
775 and is the object of a cult. The cult is closely connected to the agricultural cults; the ancestors are efficient vital forces which

304 The Bambara decorate their faces and bodies with numerous
773 scarifications, with the aim of conferring on the wearer the qualities symbolized by the scars. By their influence on the character and temperament of an individual, they help him to come up to the ideal man. These marks are associated with the myth of the origin of agriculture They are eight small scars: two vertical ones at the root of the nose, three under each eye. They imitate the facial marks of the mythical being, half man, half animal, who taught men how to cultivate the soil. (1)

1. S. de Ganay, "On a form of cicatrisation among the Bambara," Man.

f. Arrangement of the Settlements

361 The Bambara village follows rules of development which allow a stranger to recognize the disposition of the huts immediately and to single out a chief's house, that of a blacksmith, or that of any other member of the society. In fact, the village is built to the north or east of the protective tree. To the south of the village, [778] is the sacred wood, dwelling place of the chief of the spirits, where the religious ceremonies and the initiation rites take place. As more families come to live in the village, they build their huts around that of the chief, except to the east, for the chief must see the sun rise. The oldest son of the chief, his eventual successor, will have his own plot near his father's. The house of the Komo is situated outside of the village, to the south or west, hidden in a wood or a thicket. At the edge of the village is a round cabin, the house of the Nyama, in the middle is a square cabin with painted walls, house of the Gna (see the chapter on religion). In the center of the village, a cleared place around a doubalé serves for public meetings; the elders hold their councils under the branches of the doubalé.

764 [100] Finally, the cemetery of the free men is found outside the
554 village, to the west; that of captives and people of caste is to the south of the free men's cemetery.

326 Every village has its blacksmith, for he is life, and the vil-
600 lage could not subsist without him. Before the French conquest,

343 which are dried. Then it is reassembled without sealing the pieces
251 together, and as the level of the provisions goes down, the unnecessary sections are taken off. The kitchens are situated to the west of the rooms.

342 Arrangement of the huts in a concession. The chief's hut is
361 always to the east, for he must see the sun rise. His hut is often quadrangular and has several rooms. The women's huts are generally round; each has its kitchen situated to the west and closed by a separate lock. Private shower rooms are reserved for husbands and
[514] wives. Privy cabinets with two holes, one for urine and one for stool, are stopped up and condemned when they are full.

312 Finally, the well is sunk in the middle of the court or else in the immediate proximity of the concession. Water is drawn directly with a calabash fixed to a long rope.

342 Sometimes individual huts are constructed on piles for protection against mosquitoes at night; the only opening is a trap door in the floor by which the hut is entered.

g. Tombs

●764 An old custom had the family heads buried in their huts. The Fama were buried in the courts of their fortified palaces, to the northwest. Babies were buried near their mothers' huts, for their return was awaited. At the present time the Bambara are buried in cemeteries following Moslem or animist custom.

[767] [103] The brotherhood priests dig the graves; tombs may be individual or collective. Monteil (Les Bambara du Ségou et du Kaarta [The Bambara of Ségou and Kaarta]) describes a chief's tomb: the vault has the form of a parallelepiped; the lower base is one meter wide and two long, the upper base three wide and two long, and a vertical partition of 1. 50 meters forms a right angle with the bases.

In Ouassoulou the custom was to dig a common tomb of several chambers for the whole family. A square entrance about two meters high and two wide led into a narrow corridor that opened on a first chamber reserved for children; another corridor connected the first chamber with a second, larger one reserved for women and for adult males; from this a third corridor led to a last chamber, a smaller one for heads of the family. An oil lamp was placed at the

764 left of each chamber's entrance and was left to go out by itself. The body was placed in the middle of the chamber, the feet to the north and the head to the south. At the time of a new burial, all the long bones were gathered in one corner of the chamber and all the skulls in another, for the number of deceased was verified by these. Finally in the Kokum region hundreds of tumuli cover vaults consisting of a [346] heart-shaped chamber cut in the laterite and preceded by a vestibule to the west and by steps cut into the rock which lead to the open air. The outside and inside doors are closed by a slab of laterite. The outside door is hidden under the tumulus, with three equally-spaced stones marking the location. The skulls are arranged in a dome and separated from the long bones. Lastly, the tomb of the village's founding ancestor is found in the center of the village, to the north of the old fortified court of the chiefs' house.

III. Art

517 The Bambara conception of art is very different from the occidental idea of art for art's sake. Every object that we find beautiful has a precise social, religious, or technical significance for the Bambara: "The art of the Blacks is purposeful . . . it is gratuitous projection in a material of ideas and knowledge which bring the user or spectator nothing other than themselves. Doubtless crude in the first stages, often the product of superficial knowledge or even of calculated errors, the esthetic sense of the Blacks is clarified and affirmed as they learn and as they pass from a 'light knowledge' to a knowledge of the great secrets. It seems impossible to an educated man that he could make an abstraction of his knowledge to judge a dance or to become enthusiastic over the playing of a clever harpist. What we call beauty is for the Black the adequacy of the object to represent that for which it is created." (1)

1. M. Griaule, "L'art nègre" [Negro Art], Présence africaine.

532 The masks conceal the person and transform the human being into a supernatural being. They are the privileged instrument of the [749] nyama, the first [104] model having been carved to fix the vital force of the first dead ancestor in a wooden figure. "The society of

775 551 Like this first theory, the second, too, can be accepted, and the names can be translated as a lament of the parents to those who congratulate them: "He is without shame (doubtless he has come back to leave us again)." --"We may as well throw him away (i.e., will he not leave us shortly?)." -- "He is a worthless man (i.e., do you think he will not abandon us?)." -- "He is nothing (i.e., it all is the same to us whether we have him or not; will he stay with us longer than a breath which passes and disappears?)."

But whatever theory is accepted, the Negroes' belief in the reincarnation of children who died at the breast before having attained the use of reason remains unchanged. They are also generally unanimous in believing in the reincarnation of young men and women and men and women who die in the prime of life. Such persons have not completed the whole cycle of their existence and must begin it again.

And what of the old men? Do not they come back to life? When a child brings to mind the features of a deceased elder of the family, does it not receive his name? A Bambara never uses the name of a man whom he respects in vain or in an unsuitable manner; so a child animated by the soul of an old man is given a second name, a borrowed name, and the real name is known only by the father, the mother, close friends, and the one who bears it. However, many are given a most expressive name which testifies to this belief; they are called segi, sagi, "he who has come back to life."

164 775 The legends -- and there are many -- only confirm what I put forward; so need I cite any? An old man of Fobougou, a village about 30 or 40 kilometers from Ségou, not far from the Bani on the road that leads to Koutiala, was given magnificent funeral honors at his death. The fetishes were brought out of their dirty dens and bathed in the blood of victims; the women sang to the sound of the drum for three days running. It was a festival which lacked nothing, not even 775 d'lo, or millet beer. A few years later some young people of the village going in search of work went into the Tlébi (1) region,

[103]

1. The term Tlébi is used to denote the entire western region, including Bamako, Kati, Kita, Kayes, Bakel, etc., as far as the ocean.

771 strong. Is it not a fact that this law still operated forcefully at the
777 time of the last kings of Segou, when El-Hadj-Omar (1) took the
798

1. El-Hadj-Omar ("Omar the Pilgrim"), so named because, it is said, he made the journey to Mecca.

crown from the pagan king Mary to give it to his son Ahmadou (2)?

2. Bambara translation of the word Ahmed.

It wàs Ahmadou who held captive our explorers Mage and Quintin, and at the death of his father he left for Yamina and then for Nioro, leaving the crown to his son Madani. For those Bambara who were incautious, whose fetishes were seized, or who were caught sacrificing, the consequences were the confiscation of possessions, imprisonment, slavery, and death. The huge area where the native cemetery and
● [764] the European cemetery (3) are found at present was soaked with the

3. There are two European cemeteries at Ségou. The first is at the entrance of the city on the south side. The second, the only one in which burial takes place at present, is on the edge of the native cemetery, south on the road from Sens and Koutiala, about 300 or 400 meters from the city.

blood of pagans. Who will ever know how many heads rolled at that time for a purely religious purpose! On some days the arm of the executioner stopped only because it was tired and unable to strike -- so I was told by some Negroes who owed their /71/ lives to this fatigue. And I believe them, for the greatest praise that the story-tellers /griots/ accord these tyrants is that they knew how to cut off heads. The legend that the boli came from Mecca was born inevitably

794 thousands of sparks rain onto their heads and bare bodies, and smoke
796 and sizzle on their skins before going out. The korodouga, armed with
785 leafy branches, chase the sparks. They devote themselves chiefly to their obscene songs; their minds on the perforated gourds which they shake furiously, and more than one dancer feels himself getting roasted. And when the torches are almost burned out the tatougoula squat before the big drum and for the last time shake the handful of
[522] burning straw that they have left. An obscene gesture provokes a stifled laugh here and there, a "hou hou" from the souroukou, a roar from the djara, a chuckle from the soula, and cries of encouragement from around the gourds: "O do, that's it!"

While the djara /lions/ or sogo /beasts/, /wearing/ huge masks roar around the groups of drinkers, the ng'oni sama or wara tear their chests and their armpits with brushes of thorns, and the soula, grimacing and weeping, throw the group of women into confusion and put the children to flight. As to the bisatjila, they circle like lions in a cage, uttering wild animal cries and trying to excite themselves. Suddenly, as if seized by fury, they brandish their long, flexible whips. These whirl for a moment above their heads, whistle in the air, and then slap the flesh. The men strike hard; each blow leaves its mark or furrow, and /126/ blood often flows. They pale and tremble in all their limbs under the pain, but in spite of everything they strike and strike, for the instrument of torture must be worn to shreds and fly to pieces. At every blow of the whip the korodouga band throw themselves onto the victim and massage and rub him, and the souroukou lose themselves in indecent behavior in front of the great drum.

794 In addition to the sacrifice offered every seven years, there are
796 annual sacrifices to the koré, to the shades of its priests, the korétigi,
782 and finally to the shades of its initiates, the koréde. There is always
764 a sacrifice at the death of an initiate; the groups dance the sacred dance, and for three nights there is the shouting and the indescribable bedlam in the koré tou ("grove of the koré") of which I have told.

794 If the deceased initiate was an old man, a graybeard, he has
764 completed his whole career and his fellow-members come in great numbers to pay him their respects. Before the corpse, which is laid out under the trees which shade the entrance of the village, they

794 carry out their indecencies, shout obscenities, drink, and get drunk.
764 And for three consecutive nights after the burial the same scenes are repeated in front of the fetish tree.

794 The anniversary of the death of a koredé ("son of koré") who
769 became a koretigi (priest of koré), a gnéna-n-sonnaba (priest of the dasiri) or a gouatigi (head of a group, of a family), is celebrated with pomp; the family always makes it a point of honor to cook d'lo (beer), and people come from all directions to take part in the orgy. /127/

Chapter 7

The Worship of Satan or Worship of the Gnâ, or Boli

1. What is Meant by Gnâ, or Boli

776 Ever since God created their race and put it into the world, the Bambara have respected, venerated, and sacrificed to the gnéna, or djiné, those beings who are intermediate between angels and men. When one of them forgets himself under the influence of a jug of beer so far as to open to you -- oh, very slightly! -- a recess of his soul, he delights in telling you this, but he is careful not to make such a statement when he speaks to you of the gnâ, or boli. For although the beginnings of boli worship fade into the dark of the ages, it nevertheless has its history. The origin of each boli is known, and an initiate, however little instructed in its rites, can tell you whether it comes from the north or south, east or west, and whether it is male or female; and every graybeard can recite its family tree for you.

There is a great difference between the gnéna and the gnâ; they are different in every way, and we have here two beliefs which, though parallel, are absolutely distinct. Any object, whatever it may be, can become the home of a gnena, but these spirits prefer a living being, a plant, a tree, or an animal, for example, and when one is tired of its dwelling it moves elsewhere. A gnâ always lives in an

Chapter 11

Bambara Burials

1. The Grave and the Cemetery

764 The Bambara bury their dead, and the graves they dig for them are about one meter fifty to one meter sixty in depth. They are two meters long, and two to three meters wide at the opening, and about one meter wide at the bottom. Three of the walls are shaped with a pick, so that there is a ledge of 0.10 to 0.50 meter above its greatest depth; the fourth wall, which rises in a gentle slope, is not shaped with a pick except at the level of the ledge left on the other three sides. A niche is dug the whole length of this wall to receive the corpse, so that the Negroes sleep their last sleep in a kind of little hut, the part dug in a gentle slope forming the roof. Men lie on their right sides with their heads to the south and their faces to the east; women lie on their left sides with their heads to the north and their feet to the south.

Some old men are buried in the inner courts of their dwellings. This custom is not at all widespread, and almost everywhere the cemetery is located around the village, and each one rests in his field of maize. The choice places are reserved for the heads of families and elders, however; the more authority they have and the greater /215/ their age, the nearer to the wall are their graves. Some villages have their cemeteries around the sacred grove which is reserved for the dasiri, genie protector of hamlets. The choice places are at the edge of the grove, and the priests of the fetish, the gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, are quite often buried on the near side of the grove, leaving the fetish tree between them and their subjects.

4: Henry--237 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

2. No Sacrifice to the Shades of the Dead

764 782 At every death the blood of hens, goats, and dogs flows in streams. I would like to be able to think and say with some Europeans that all these sacrifices are an honor paid to the shades of the deceased and the ancestors, but that is impossible for me. Not the slightest sacrifice is offered to a person's soul on the day of death or the day of burial. The Negroes are logical in their beliefs; the soul does not leave the body until after burial, and a dead person has no right to a sacrifice until he is in Lahara, or the world of spirits. Prayers are undoubtedly said. Objects which belonged to the deceased or were used in paying the final respects to him are destroyed and placed as saraka at the corner of land formed by paths that cross. But nothing in all this would be a sacrifice, bloody or bloodless in Bambara eyes (1).

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1. Very rarely, a dead person is thought to have caused a Negro's death. If the sorcerer asserts that a deceased individual is the cause of a death, a sacrifice is made to him, but it is made to quiet him because he is a murderer, and not at all because he is dead.

764 782 761 And to whom are they directed, all these hecatombs and streams of blood? I already said, in the chapter where I discussed sickness and death, that a Bambara never dies a natural death. Always he is the victim of poison, of a gnâma or of a djiné, or -- 80 times out of 100 -- a powerful fetish, such as a Komo, Kono, Nama, Nia, or Douga, has caused him to perish. At every death one or another of the following expressions is on all lips: "Souba ta no do, that is the way the souba act"; -- "keroti kér'a la, the poison of the fetishes was thrown at him"; -- "dounkono dir'a ma, he has been given poison"; -- "Komo, Kono, or Nama, etc., sera a ma, the Komo, Kono, or /216/ Nama

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782 has reached him"; -- "djinéou no do, the djiné are the cause of it";
761 -- "a fa gnâma do, it is his father's gnâma"; -- "boli y'a fa, a boli killed him."

Thus, all the sacrifices which are made on the occasion of a death are directed to the fetishes which are thought to be murderers, and if a deceased member of the family or of a family of strangers gets a slight trickle of blood, that is because on the word of a sorcerer he is guilty. When it is thought that the deceased was the victim of poured poison (dounkono) or korti (poison of the fetishes), thrown sorcery, there is recourse to the diviners and sorcerers to ascertain what invisible being must be soothed and what sacrifice should be uttered. If a gnâma is involved, a sacrifice to a fetish is often prescribed to ensure its protection, but to the gnâma itself a plain saraka, with or without bloodshed, is offered. These saraka are seldom made to the Supreme Being Alla; they are offered to the lesser djiné genii that run around the village and like to rest in the da-n-koun in among the gnâma.

3. Respects Paid to the Uncircumcised

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[304] Few honors are rendered at death to the uncircumcised and unexcised; such persons are not really Bambara, for they lack the tribal mark. The head of the village and his council ascertain that the death has occurred and, depending on the order received from the diviners, a sacrifice is offered or a saraka placed. The people of the village come to offer their condolences to the bereaved family, and when the grave has been dug, two or three youths bury the corpse without further ceremony.

The father wears mourning for a whole day, and for at least three days the mother grieves in her hut with a few women friends, her neighbors. A barbaric custom also decrees that if the deceased is an unweaned infant its big toe must be broken, in the presence of its mother, and many fathers do more. They mark it with a knife on the forehead, the nape of the neck, the shoulders, the arms; they cut the upper lip or the lobe of an ear. This procedure always makes a deep impression on a mother, especially if she has given birth when

766 young, and since custom demands that she take advantage of her marriage without delay and conceive as soon as possible, she may give birth to an infant bearing a mark or /217/ the appearance of a mark made on the corpse of its older brother. Such an event contributes more than a little toward strengthening the Bambara belief in the reincarnation of souls. This belief is even one of the reasons why infants at the breast are buried in the inner court and sometimes in the mother's hut, and are very seldom taken to the cemetery (1).

[775]

1. The soul leaves the body after burial. The soul of a child must take on flesh again in the womb of its mother, and she must conceive as soon as possible. When an infant is buried in the court or the hut, its soul does not have to roam and cannot mistake the family.

764 The respects paid to the circumcised and the excised vary a little according to the age and status of the individuals; it might be said that there is no burial without some particular, characteristic little feature. To give as accurate an idea of the proceedings as possible, I have divided the burials into four categories: first, that of old people; second, that of heads of families; third, that of married persons; and fourth, that of the unmarried. After a word concerning the burial of pregnant women or those dying in childbirth, I will speak of the sacrifices made to the fetishes, of the respects paid to initiates of koré, or koté, and I will close this chapter with a description of the burial of the excommunicated and of the way the dead are worshipped.

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4. Burials of the Circumcised, Old People, Heads of Families, Married and Unmarried Persons, Pregnant Women

Burials of the First Category, Those of Old People

[88] When I speak of old people I mean every Bambara (man or woman) who has grandchildren and so is a grandfather or grandmother. [224 575] When such an old person dies, gunpowder speaks and the shooting is even quite heavy if the deceased belongs to the association of hunters or there is an initiate of that sect (2) among his children. The chief

2. Hunters (douzo) all belong to a special sect. In order to enter it, a man must have passed his tests and killed a deer. The hunter has a special costume. See pp. 140 ff.

764 202 slave or, if there is none, a trusted man runs to notify the headman and his council, and all these dignitaries, spear in hand, come to verify the death and offer the /218/ first condolences to the family. Couriers at once go off in all directions to notify members of the family and friends. The person sent to married children is usually the one who was best man and sometimes the fourouboloma tigi (guardian of the wedding gifts) -- at the marriage. He carries out his mission with tact and delicacy. He first notifies the husband /of a daughter/ who summons his legal wife and orders her to go and take care of her father, who is seriously ill. So she leaves her house knowing nothing, and at least keeping a remnant of hope in her heart. It is only when she is on the way that she learns the sad news.

764 [214] While everyone is running right and left, the women wash the body with an aromatic plant called sou kola (1). They dress it in

1. Basil, a labiata, ocymum album and febrifugum.

764 white clothes or wrap it in a shroud, and when they have finished preparing it, they lay it in the middle of the dwelling on a coarse mat (called tjékala or sometimes kara) which is covered with a fine mat in which it will be wrapped to be carried to the grave. Many times, too, a heavy stone, used to grind sorghum, is laid on the abdomen of the corpse, doubtless to keep it from swelling. The women then cover themselves with white cloths, bed covers if nothing else is available; then they sit on their tiny stools and mourn and weep.

The eldest in the family, the new gouatigi (head of the family) also has much to do. /Note the assumption throughout that the old person deceased was also a family head. - Ed./ He consults the sorcerers, places saraka or has them placed, sacrifices, and he does not rest until the diviners have indicated to him the guilty one, the fetish who is the assassin. Dressed in white, he then goes to sit in the b'lon or at the door of the b'lon (the entry hut), and the headman and his council as well as neighbors and friends from the village and from neighboring villages come to pay their respects and express their sympathy.

All these people behave correctly; they talk in low tones and avoid laughter, and the monotony of the silence is broken by the cries of the women. As soon as they come in sight of the village, they throw white cloths over their heads and their cries grow ever louder until at last they are in the hut /219/ of the deceased. There they stop crying, dry their tears, and immediately begin to clap their hands, beat a gourd inverted in a conari full of water, and sing of the honors and achievements of the deceased.

[761] Indeed, there is nothing sad about the death of an old man; he has finished to the end the cycle of his existence, and it is in good taste to rejoice. The grandchildren of the deceased are full of joy, for their great-uncles and uncles give them a ba (800 cowrie shells); they are allowed to take a fat hen from the hen house (often even a billy or nanny goat from the grandfather's stable), and they are made [534] to dance to the sound of xylophones, drums, and triangles (kingé). This dance of the grandchildren is held before the first djansa (1).

1. A kind of alms given to the players of instruments and to the children.

764 during the night that precedes the burial in front of the corpse which is displayed in the court, and again during the night that follows the burial. The djansa is performed once in the morning and once in the afternoon for three days running. The members of the family, men and women, arrive in Indian file, singing in low tones; they form a ring and circle to the sound of the music. From time to time they throw out a few cowrie shells, and the children, who have come in large numbers for the occasion, scramble after them. On leaving, each places his offering on the ground near the chief musician.

At the cemetery near a fresh grave many feathers, a remnant of ashes, and a few small, carefully picked bones are to be seen. One imagines a sacrifice, but there has been none. The youths who dig the grave receive a hen in payment, and it is a gift from the deceased. For this reason, incidentally, it is given to them dead, after an old man has cracked its skull against the wall of the b'lon, or entry hut.

The grave is dug; the children of the deceased are all present (2), and he is about to be buried. The corpse is wrapped in a mat

> 2. All the children and grandchildren must be there, and in fact they all come unless it is absolutely impossible to do so. Except for a case of emergency, people sometimes wait one to three days to allow everyone to be present.

343] and then laid under the goua, a coarse shelter that casts a little shade at the entrances of the dwellings, and through the mediation of the one in charge of the funeral ceremony, almost always a sorcerer, those present pay their respects /220/ to the deceased and offer him a few cowrie shells. Children and grandchildren, each in turn, accuse themselves of lack of consideration and respect in their conduct and ask pardon. Strangers also come and beg the deceased not to be angry, not to wish them ill, and all one hears is the voice of the herald crying: "Pardon, do not be angry, we loved you and respected you, be happy during your stay in Lahara (kingdom of invisible beings)."

764 This ceremony, as beautiful as it is touching, ends with this prayer: "Give us rain when winter comes, give us a plentiful harvest, a vigorous old age, children and wives, and give us prosperity." [482] Four strong fellows then come and take the corpse on their shoulders and, preceded by children and grandchildren who shout and cry, they carry it to the cemetery at almost a run, and the whole crowd follows them (1). The men line up around the grave, the women place themselves behind them, and the sons of the deceased go down into the grave. They undo the mat, take their father in their arms, and lay him in the niche on his right side, facing east. Then they tear a little of the shroud, or white blouse, of the buried man, and one of those present takes the strip torn off and holds it outside of the grave. [417] The children build an arch above the corpse out of small boards that are sometimes worked and colored, but most frequently out of wood chips (faléma) or large slabs of earth dried in the sun. While they are building, the youths mix mortar to stop up the cracks and thoroughly coat the whole structure. The women clap their hands and then sing in low tones to the sound of the drums.

1. In Bani country I have seen the spear of the deceased carried with great ceremony. The oldest son from time to time threw a few cowrie shells onto the corpse, and the crowd rushed to get them. This djansa is seldom performed, and the custom is not at all general.

764 782 When the work is done, the children come out of the grave, and the person in charge of the funeral ceremony comes forward, on his shoulder a hoe with the blade hafted in reverse and in his hand a gourd of water. He leans over the grave. The drums stop beating, the women are silent, and he pours water on the head of the buried man three times, saying: "See /221/ this water, do not be angry, forgive us, give us rain in winter and a plentiful harvest (1). Whether

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1. In the eyes of the Negroes this ceremony is not a bloodless sacrifice but a simple prayer; and the water is poured to give the words greater emphasis, since in their eyes it is the element without which nothing lives nor can live.

the wind blows from the west or the east, from the north or the south, may it be favorable to us. Give us a long life, many descendants, wives and prosperity." The audience answers, "Amina -- o dé ka ké (let it be so)," and, using hoes hafted in reverse so that the curve of the blade is on the outside, the youths fill the grave. The drums beat again, and the women clap their hands and improvise a song whose words usually can be reduced to these: "Our father is dead, we have been told he is dead. But he will come back! Young men, fill the grave well, so that no souba, no hyena, nor any wild animal can take away the corpse."

764 When the grave is filled, the one who is holding the strip of cloth attached to the blouse, or the shroud, of the deceased pulls it toward him until it tears and remains in his hands. This ribbon is a [851] precious relic of which tafo are made; they are a protection from a host of evils, especially throat ailments and gnâma. The coarse mat (tjékala or kara) which was the bed or the seat of the deceased, quite often together with his shoes and the small earthen pot that was his wash basin, are laid on the tomb. If the deceased was a woman, pieces of a gourd, fragments of a hearth, or the stick for stirring gruel (to-n-galama) are thrown onto the tomb instead of the wash basin. The pliant mat in which the corpse was wrapped is often given to a friend. The latter goes and burns it outside the village, or before entering his own village if he is a foreigner; he says: "Here is a mat on which no one will die from now on."

[777] Wednesday and Saturday are two unlucky days. On these days 764 strangers never present their condolences to the bereaved family, and 782 if a burial takes place, a small white chicken is killed and given to the deceased so that he can placate the spirits as soon as the grave

764 782 has been filled and his soul goes to Lahara. In the eyes of the Negroes, this act has none of the attributes of a sacrifice; it is the price of the right to enter Lahara and is given by the children to /222/ their father's soul. Moreover, they give it to him alive, and it is slipped into the grave at the moment when the last small board, the last wood chip, or the last earthen slab making up the root is set in place (1).

1. A nest egg is slipped in instead of a hen if the deceased was a woman.

764 At the end of the ceremony the deceased's dog is killed (2),

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2. If the deceased owned a dog it is always killed unless the old man decided otherwise while he was alive. There are Bambara, especially women, who raise dogs in order to have this honor, and for this reason only.

and the sons-in-law and the brothers-in-law eat to, or millet gruel. [431] When they depart they also receive a rooster or a hen. It is given them in the name of the deceased, and since it is the gift of a dead person, they kill and eat it on the way (3). The fetishes and the genii

[782]

3. This practice, again, is no sacrifice in the eyes of the Negro.

would be displeased if such a gift should arrive in the village alive, and whoever became guilty of such a crime would become the plaything of most of the gnâma and could dig his grave.

The Bambara do not place any kind of food either on or in the grave. But for three days in the evening, at nightfall, a dish of tô (gruel) and a little fresh water is placed on the goua so that the soul of the old man may satisfy his hunger and quench his thirst.

the women belong to him but he cannot make them his own. From then on they remain without husbands unless they ransom themselves, and they quickly become soungourou (4). /224/

4. Soungourou, a woman who gives herself to the first comer.

Burials of the Second Category, Those of Heads of Families

Having described the respects paid to old people, that is, to grandfathers, I now need only proceed by elimination and say which of the procedures listed are not included in the burials of other persons. The honors paid to the gouatigi, or head of the family, whether or not he is married, are identical, or almost identical, to those paid to old people. But if he is not a hunter and none of his children is an initiate of the sect, his death is not announced by gunshots. Moreover, there are no dances except for the djansa, held evening and morning for three days, nor does anyone come at the time when the body is removed to the cemetery to accuse or excuse himself for a lack of respect or consideration toward the deceased. Through the intermediary of the herald or of the person in charge of the funeral ceremonies, each pays his respects and his few cowrie shells, and, after a pardon is asked on behalf of all, the prayer is said.

If he dies childless or is laid in the grave on a Wednesday or Saturday, unlucky days, the deceased gouatigi receives a white pullet to pay the spirits for his welcome as he enters Lahara, and he receives it alive. If a wife of a gouatigi is buried on an unlucky day or dies without having given birth to a child (1), an egg of a brooding hen is

1. If a woman dies after all her children, but has given birth to a child and nursed it, she does not fall into this category. It is a disgrace to receive a hen's egg because one has not had children. The rule is the same for men.

[558]

764 slipped into the grave.

Burials of the Third Category, Those of Married Persons Who are not Heads of Families

The death of married persons who do not have the honor of being gouatigi, or head of a family, is not announced by a gunshot unless they belong to the sect of hunters. For them there is no arch of small boards, chips of wood, or dried bricks; a few tree branches are thrown onto the corpse, and the grave is completed. At the removal of the body the prayer is recited, but no one offers cowrie shells and there is no djansa (2). Depending on their sex, they receive a white hen

2. I have seen the djansa held even for young men who were circumcised and not married, but these were exceptions and did not reflect a general practice.

or an egg, if the burial /225/ takes place on a Saturday or a Wednesday or if they die without a child, and their dog, faithful companion in travels in the bush, is not killed (1).

1. It is not a general practice to offer gruel, or to.

Burials of the Fourth Category, Those of the Unmarried

Circumcised men and excised women who are unmarried are offered primarily tears. They have not completed the cycle of their existence, they have hardly begun, and at the death of one of them the whole village is in consternation. The gnéna-n-sonnaba, or dougoutigi, (the religious head), offers his condolences and withdraws into his hut; he does not appear at any of the funeral ceremonies.

764 There is seldom a djansa for unmarried persons, and the corpse lying in the grave does not even get branches to protect it from the earth with which it is covered. Not having had children, the young man receives his live hen and the girl her egg.

Burials of Women Who Were Pregnant or Died in Childbirth

766 845 The death of a woman during pregnancy or while giving birth to her child stirs the whole female population. To appease the spirits, drive away the gnâma, and protect the village from another misfortune of this kind, all the excised women go to cut branches of karité (Bassia parkii) or dogora. As soon as the deceased is carried to the grave, they burst out of the village, crying and weeping. Three times they go back toward the village, waving their branches, and call out "hou" three times in shouts that disturb and chill you.

[326] At the edge of the grave, or most often in the grave itself, a blacksmith -- the surgeon of the occasion -- removes the child, tells its sex, and lays it near the mother (2). During the operation the

2. If the deceased has already been delivered, the stillborn child is wrapped in the mother's mat. The operation is performed for one who has not been delivered, less to save the child's life than to spare the deceased the disgrace of the egg.

766 845 847 A newborn child deprived of its mother is condemned to death. It is not strangled, of course, but no woman wants to give it her breast, and the little thing dies of hunger. If a woman were to nurse it out of compassion, the spirits and gnâma would take revenge by

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causing her own child to die. A mother who has lost her child may adopt an orphan and give it her breast.

766 crowd /226/ always withdraws, and the blacksmith remains alone
845 with his assistant. When the work is done, they wash their hands on the grave itself, and the operator makes the customary prayer: "Whether the wind comes from the east or the west, from the north or the south, etc.," (see above, p. 244).

5. Sacrifices to Fetishes on the Occasion of a Death

782 Although at the time of death there is no sacrifice to the soul
764 of the deceased nor to the shades of ancestors, blood flows nevertheless. It even flows in torrents for the Bambara are not satisfied with
778 reddening the family boli; they stain with blood all the boli fetishes they believe to be guilty. Nor do initiates of the sects forget their deceased brothers, and for a friend who was initiated the same day as they themselves, they cannot refuse the boli a hen and a kola nut. If the deceased is the master of a fetish, its priest, or an influential person on its staff, all the initiates comply, and the sacrifice becomes general. The initiates do more; in the evening they take the god out of its temple, and all night long they mingle their wild animal shouts with the blasts of sacred horns and trumpets blown by heralds. The latter very often wear hideous horned masks on their heads and are dressed in cloaks of feathers.

761 Eighty times out of a hundred, death is attributed to a powerful
782 boli which is taking vengeance, punishing or rewarding, and in the
764 environs of Ségou the Komo, Nia, Kono, Nama, and Douga are the
778 ones who have the most deaths to their credit. When the murdering boli is known, the entire village is notified; the trousers, blouse and bed cover of the deceased, or the tafé (1) if it is a woman, are hung

1. Tafé: a rectangular piece of cloth which women wind around their bodies to cover themselves.

761 782 764 778 on the branches of the sacred tree under which the fetish dwells and at the door of its temple, and the members of its staff know how to extol their god. Under these conditions they are without pity; they bleed the bereaved family white, so that the tax demanded by our circle officers (2) is nothing compared to the tax that they have to

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2. The head tax is 3. 50 francs per person and 5 francs for the servants of Europeans. Here France is surely not a "tyrant, " but a tender mother.

pay. /227/

782 764 [824] What do they not have to give for a sacrifice to the Komo, for example? The whole house is turned upside down to find goats, dogs, kola nuts, roosters, and hens, gnâma-n-kou (Amormum melegueta), and djalakouma (a plant whose name I do not know). The family needs all this, cost what it may, and if they have to buy it all they have to pay double or triple the value of the objects, for others make profits from their necessity. First a dog or a goat is sacrificed to appease the fetish and pay respects to it. Then to find out whether it is satisfied and its hatred assuaged, two red roosters and two hens with golden necks bite the dust. A bara (1) (gourd) full of gnâma-n-

[415 854]

1. This bara (a large pumpkin /courge/ with a small opening at the top) can hold from 18 to 20 liters of liquid. The true gourd is half of a pumpkin.

kou fruit and another full of djalakouma are offered. One portion of these fruits is used for holy water (2); the other is sold for the benefit

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2. The holy water of the Komo is made of roots and leaves of the djalakouma and the fruit of the

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gnâma-n-kou or the na-yanka (I do not know the name of this plant), put to boil and soak in water. To make it effective, at least two kola nuts are offered to the fetish and five hens are sacrificed to it.

782 764 of the staff, which lives off the altar. For the mere act of having killed a dog or a goat, of which they receive a good share of the meat, they get a fee consisting of a basket of sorghum (18 to 20 kilograms) and 1, 600 cowrie shells (about 2 francs).

Since initiates of the fetish are the only ones who can touch the corpse and lay it in its final home, they receive 8, 000 to 10, 000 cowrie shells (about 8 to 10 francs) on that score. At the end of the sangafo (3) the god's retinue go and sweep the hut of the deceased,

3. Sangafo, to go and offer condolences to the relatives of a deceased."

purify it with holy water, and drive out the last gnâma of the murdering Komo, and for this five fine hens are slaughtered. As payment for their trouble, the family also gives them five to six meters of cloth and 8 to 10 ba (4) (about 8 to 10 francs); 50 francs do not cover

[802] 4. A ba is worth 800 cowrie shells or about 1 franc. (The Bambara count by 40 and 80, and not by 50 and 100. 40, débé; 80, kémé.)

the cost.

Fortunately, the family does not bear all the expenses. Friends [43] help a little, and everyone brings his offering: from one person they get a /228/ hen, from another a débé (40 cowrie shells) or a kémé (80 cowrie shells). Nevertheless, they bear most of the cost, and [824] the fetishes are one of the chief reasons for that bonding of children (1)

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1. A bonded person works for his food, just like a slave. His condition is worse than that of the slave, for in addition to his food, the latter receives a bit of cloth to cover himself, but the bonded person does not. A slave can ransom himself for a sum varying between 100 and 200 francs, and at present he can escape without fear of being pursued and without paying anything at all. A bonded person must pay the amount of his bond to the last cowrie shell, whether he escapes or not. There are Negroes who, for a certain amount, will give you one of their children for one or two years. These children are not paid since the amount has already been paid, but besides food they get clothing and some gratuities beyond the payment for their work. Lacking the proper words, the Bambara call this also, "bonding" even though it is basically a real "domestic service." When the agreed time has passed, these young people go back to their homes without any payment being made. Even though the Negroes call this bonding, they make a distinction: a) slavery is a stigma which always remains; b) true bonding is a stigma that does not disappear unless the bonded person himself pays the price of his bonding; c) the bonding which is called "domestic service" does not involve any stigma; they are workers and not menial laborers.

764 which is nothing less than disguised slavery. In the presence of a
782 European the Negroes like to complain that he cannot meet their taxes, but they should not be listened to too closely -- 99 times out of 100 they are lying! Let us not make war against the military or civil official responsible for levying the tax, which is not at all exorbitant; let us think before all about the boli and their staffs, a band of persons without principles or law, human vultures with greedy fingers who attack the weak, the widows and orphans, terrify them with their threats of death. They do not leave these people in peace until they have taken everything: hens, goats, dogs, cowrie shells, sorghum, and often freedom.

6. Respects Paid to Initiates of the Koré, or Koté

794 The initiates of a fetish are never indifferent to the death of a
766 brother, and they hasten to find a hen and a kola nut with which to prove their attachment to the deceased and to assuage the wrath of the god. The sect of koré does things in a grand, even in a ceremonious, manner, if there is any ceremony in those nocturnal orgies where d'lo, or millet beer, is drunk to /229/ the point of senselessness, and where lascivious and obscene dances are danced.

When a young man who is koré dé (son of koré, initiate of the
[778] sect) dies, relatives and friends redden with blood the sacred tree and the kara, a perforated board painted red and white, which is the genie's emblem. Although there is general mourning in the village, tears are dried when evening comes, and for three nights there is nameless
[785] bedlam and endless shouting in the kore tou (the sacred grove) as initiates flagellate themselves, burn their backs with torches, tear their bodies with thorns abandon themselves to their barbaric dances,
[534] and lose themselves in lewd gestures in front of the dénouba (drums measuring from one to one and a half meters) and the kingé (a triangle, an iron tube, which is hung from the thumb of the left hand and which is struck with a ring or an iron nail placed on the little finger).

For the old people who are granted not a tear nor a regret but for whom there are dances and songs, fellow initiates come in large numbers, and during the night preceding the burial, they make a

4: Henry--285 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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Bambara burial.
The corpse being laid in the grave.

4: Henry--286 M-5 (ca. 1900) 1910 FA8 Bambara FA8

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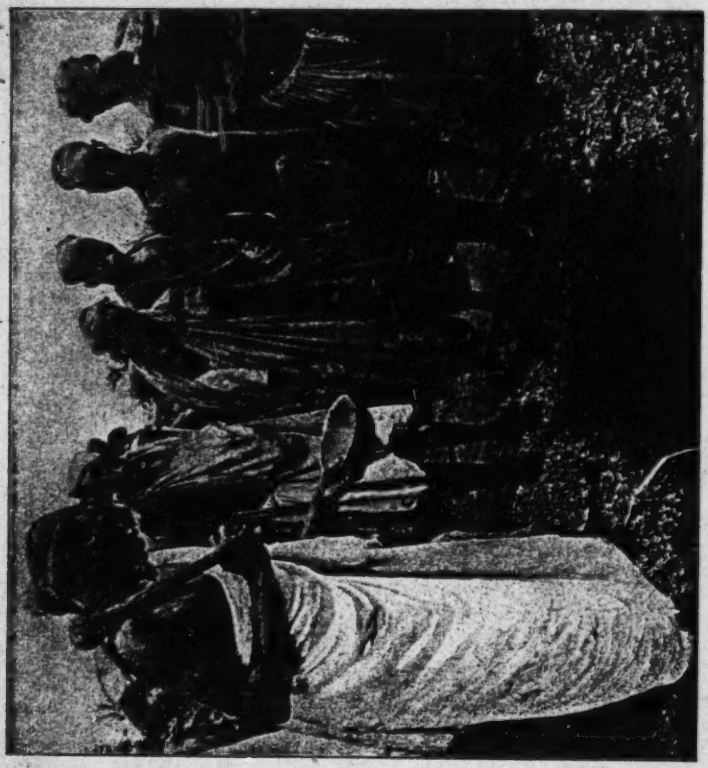

Bambara burial.
The last prayer.